



STATE OF IOWA

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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
CHARLES J. KROGMEIER, DIRECTOR

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DHS Reorganization Continues

DES MOINES, Iowa – The reorganization of the Iowa Department of Human Services continued Monday with the announcement of three consolidated services, including a statewide child abuse intake unit, and the addition of 23 county offices to be converted to part-time status.

DHS Director Charles Krogmeier said he has selected Des Moines as the location for the intake center, which will determine if a complaint of child or dependent adult abuse should be investigated by DHS social workers.

The new unit will consolidate eight separate units around the state.

“The purpose here is not just to economize but to ensure consistency in our response when Iowans call us with possible cases of child or dependent adult abuse,” he said. “We want to make sure that complaints of abuse are evaluated the same no matter where they originate.”

The 34-employee intake unit will replace eight separate units employing 44 workers.

Two other consolidated units were also announced.

A 23-employee group in Council Bluffs will process certain Medicaid applications and a 75-employee unit in Des Moines will manage childcare programs. Those units replace regional groups employing a total of 40 and 91 workers, respectively.

The consolidations take place in July but were originally announced late last year as part of Krogmeier’s reorganization of DHS, Iowa’s largest state agency. Salary savings will be used to reduce further erosion of frontline staff.

“With today’s technology, these jobs are perfectly suited for centralization and I’m enthused about the change,” Krogmeier said.

The job of the intake unit is to evaluate complaints of child or dependent adult abuse. In cases where the allegation would be abuse under Iowa law if proven true, a DHS social worker is sent to investigate.

The investigation function will remain locally-based, and internal DHS regulations on response times will not change.

Regional intake units currently field a total of about 50,000 calls a year, including about 35,000 calls alleging abuse or neglect. Last year, about 25,000 intakes were accepted for investigations by DHS social workers.

Krogmeier said the consolidation will continue to minimize differences that could occur in the current system. Intake units now operate in Dubuque, Davenport, Council Bluffs, Sioux City, Ames, Des Moines, Waterloo, and Cedar Rapids.

People who want to report suspected child or dependent adult abuse should call the same 24/7 number that is used today, 1-800-362-2178.

The Council Bluffs unit will share space with an existing DHS customer service center that currently fields calls from DHS clients who are reporting changes to their cases. The group will process Medicaid applications for people in or going to nursing homes or other facilities.

The childcare group will be housed in existing DHS offices in Des Moines. The unit determines eligibility for the subsidized childcare program, which helps low-income families provide childcare for about 22,000 children, and will administer payments to childcare providers who participate in the subsidy program.

Also on Monday Krogmeier announced that 23 additional county DHS offices will be converted from full- to part-time status, meaning services will be available to clients via reduced office hours or by appointment.

The DHS currently has offices in every county, with 34 of them converted to part time in 2002. The development of Internet applications for benefits and other changes have reduced the need for in-person visits to county offices.

The change will not save state money because counties provide office space and support, but Krogmeier said the decision is needed to deal with expected staff reductions and changing logistics.

“With budget pressure and the inability to fill vacancies, this change will give us greater flexibility to deploy our staff,” he said.

Krogmeier emphasized that the two main functions of local offices – assistance with benefit programs and child welfare – will remain in place.

“No matter where you live in Iowa, we’ll help you apply for benefit programs if you are eligible, and we’ll keep kids safe with our child abuse assessments and the rest of our child welfare program,” he said.

These counties will be going to less-than-full-time: Page, Decatur, Appanoose, Monroe, Mills, Madison, Marion, Keokuk, Washington, Poweshiek, Crawford, Boone, Tama, Jones, Jackson, Delaware, Hardin, Plymouth, Cherokee, Wright, Bremer, Kossuth, and Winnebago.

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Editors: Here is a link to the new county alignment.

<http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/docs/lessThanFullTime2010.pdf>